

Message Text

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64
ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 L-03 SS-20 NSC-10 DRC-01

/091 W
----- 016800

R 311255Z JAN 74
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6495
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRN, FR
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: FRENCH-ORIGIN ITC'S

REF: A. STATE 019029, B. PARIS 2266

LONDON FOR MEADOWS

SUMMARY: PANAM HEADQUARTERS HAS RAPPED KNUCKLES OF LOCAL REP RE SHORT-DURATION ITC'S. BACKGROUND SUGGESTS THAT INTEREST THIS SUBJECT SPRINGS FROM FRENCH RATHER THAN PANAM AND THAT ABRAHAM WAS LESS THAN FORTHRIGHT THIS POINT DURING CHARTER TALKS. EMBASSY HOPES DEPT. CAN HELP SMOOTH PANAMS RUFFLED FEATHERS. END SUMMARY

1. PANAM REP RAUSCHENPLAT IS UPSET AT TELEX HE HAS RECEIVED FROM PANAM HEADQUARTERS CRITICAL OF ALLEGED APPROACH MADE TO GOF ON HIS OWN RE SHORT-DURATION ITCS AS CLAIMED BY FRENCH DEL IN LAST WEEKS CHARTER TALKS.

2. WHEN APPRISED BY EMBASSY OF HOW ABOVE QUESTION HAD BEEN RAISED BY ABRAHAM DURING CHARTER TALKS, RAUSCHENPLAT DENIED FLATLY HAVING EVER APPROACHED

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FRENCH THIS SUBJECT. HE SAID THAT, ON CONTRARY, IT

WAS ABRAHAM HIMSELF WHO HAD TOSSED OUT IDEA OF SHORT-DURATION ITCS AND INVITED COMMENTS AT MEETING HE CONVENED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO WITH TOUR ORGANIZERS AND CARRIERS. PANAM WAS REPRESENTED AT MEETING BY COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF PARIS OFFICE WHO, HE ASSURED RAUSCHENPLAT, HAD TAKEN GREAT CARE TO STRESS INABILITY TO COMMUNICATE ANY OFFICIAL PANAM POSITION THIS SUBJECT. SUBSEQUENTLY, AIR FRANCE HAD SOLICITED PANAM VIEWS DIRECTLY ON POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION OF

SHORT-DURATION ITCS BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER IMPACT OF THEN ANNOUNCED GOFT INTENTION TERMINATE FRENCH-ORIGIN AFFINITY FLIGHTS EFFECTIVE DEC. 31, 1973. IN ORDER NOT LOSE MARKET AIR FRANCE ADVOCATED FRIDAY MONDAY ITCS TO US ON GROUNDS THIS WOULD RESPOND TO DEMAND OF IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF FRENCH MARKET AND WEEKEND PROGRAMMING WOULD AVOID DIVERSION OF BUSINESS TRAVELERS AWAY FROM SCHEDULED SERVICES. RAUSCHENPLAT SAID HE TRIED TO DISSUADE AIR FRANCE FROM FILING LIBERALIZED ITC PROGRAM AND INSTEAD TO ORIENT THEM TOWARD PRESSING SGAC TO RELAX BAN ON FRENCH-ORIGIN AFFINITIES.

3. IN LIGHT OF THIS BACKGROUND WE SOUGHT TO CLARIFY SITUATION WITH ABRAHAM WHEN CONVEYING TO HIM REFTEL (A) RESPONSE. ABRAHAM SAID THAT IN RAISING MATTER WITH US DEL HE HAD BEEN REFERRING TO SHORT-DURATION AFFINITIES (SIC) AS WELL AS ITC'S. WHEN WE ASKED FOR MORE PARTICULARS ON ALLEGED PANAM INTEREST IN MATTER WHICH WE SINCE UNDERSTOOD AIR FRANCE HAD BEEN INFORMALLY EXPLORING, ABRAHAM WAS VAGUE AND UNFORTHCOMING. HE SHOWED NO INTEREST IN DELVING INTO BACKGROUND OR PURSUING DISCUSSION FURTHER.

4. COMMENT: WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT RAUSCHENPLAT'S ACCOUNT. WELL BEFORE US-FRENCH TALKS HE HAD TOLD US OF PANAMS SUCCESS LATE IN YEAR WITH SHORT-DURATION AFFINITY FLIGHTS TO US FOR WHICH THERE HAD BEEN GOOD DEMAND. HE HAD NEVER SPOKEN TO US OF INTEREST IN SHORT-DURATION ITC'S NOR DO WE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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RECALL HIS ALLUDING TO THIS IN HIS INFORMAL MEETING LAST WEEK WITH US DEL. RCAA'S RECOLLECTION WAS THAT ABRAHAM'S REMARKS TO US DEL WERE CONFINED SOLELY TO SHORT-DURATION ITC'S AND NO MENTIONWHATEVER WAS MADE OF AFFINITIES, FOR MENTION OF AFFINITIES IN THAT CONTEXT WOULD DOUBTLESS HAVE FLAGGED US DEL INTEREST ON SEVERAL COUNTSAT THAT STAGE OF TALKS. WE SUSPECT, THERE-

FORE, THAT ABRAHAM WAS BEING A BIT LOOSE WITH HIS FACTS THEN AND NOW, HAVING PRETENDED PANAM INTEREST PERHAPS IN HOPE OF SMOKING OUT MORE FORTHRIGHT EXPRESSION OF US DEL VIEWS OR PERHAPS TAKING THIS DEVIOUS MEANS TO SERVE OR APPEAR TO SERVE INTERESTS OF AIR FRANCE OBSERVERS PRESENT.

MOREOVER, RECALLING ABRAHAMS EMPHASIS ON THAT OCCASION THAT HE WAS "INFORMALLY" ASKING US DEL VIEWS, THERE WAS AMPLE OPPORTUNITY DURING US DEL VSIT TO SOUND THEM OUT MORE INFORMALLY THAN ACROSS THE NEGOTIATING TABLE, WHICH REINFORCES SUSPICION OF WHY ABRAHAM COSE THAT FORUM.

5. RAUSCHENPLAT IS TELEXING HIS OWN DENIAL TO HEADQUARTERS BUT WOULD BE APPRECIATIVE OF ANYTHING EMBASSY CAN DO TO HELP SMOOTH THINGS OVER. DEPT. IS REQUESTD DO WHAT IT CAN IN THIS REGARD WITH PANAM HEADQUARTERS, SINCE WE ARE CONVINCED IN LIGHT OF RAUSCHENPLATS EXPLANATION AND ABRAHAMS EQUIVOCATION THAT FORMER WAS BALMELESS IN THIS MATTER. STONE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEETINGS, AIR FARES, SUPPLEMENTAL AIRLINES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 JAN 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PARIS02736
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974012/aaaaabor.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. STATE 019029, B. PARIS 2266
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 APR 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <30 MAY 2002 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CIVAIR: FRENCH-ORIGIN ITC'S
TAGS: ETRN, FR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005